



Light from the Word

The Faith of Isaac

Theme verse: *“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”*¹

As we think of Isaac in the scriptures, we find the events of his life were often overshadowed by others. When he was nearly offered in sacrifice, we think of Abraham's mighty faith and obedience. When he desired a helpmate, we think of Abraham's servant and Rebekah's faith. When Isaac sought to bless his eldest son, we think of Jacob obtaining the blessing through deception.

Isaac's faith was revealed not in the notable deeds or journeys or visions of his father Abraham or son Jacob, but in peaceably trusting in God's promises and submitting to His workings through life's circumstances. God gave equal respect to Isaac's faith, calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Let's take a closer look at how Isaac became a peaceable and enduring link of faith through which God's promises were passed from one generation to another.

We can picture a young Isaac asking his mother how she came to have a son in her old age, and marveling at God's promise fulfilled by his own birth. Through time Isaac's faith and peaceable spirit must have

grown as he realized that God desired him to be a joint heir of the promised blessings. We should likewise implant in our youth the knowledge that they each are a special blessing from God and can inherit His eternal promises by walking in faith.

As he grew into manhood, Isaac was traumatically exposed to the costs of discipleship and rewards of faith. Imagine his emotions as his loving father Abraham — in obedience to God — took him on a long journey, bound him, laid him on an altar, and took up a knife to slay him in sacrifice to God. Even in this fearful and confusing trial, Isaac peaceably submitted to his father, mirroring his father's submission to God's command and trust in God's promises. Thankfully, Isaac in the next moment experienced the depth of God's mercy as God provided a ram to sacrifice in his place.² A few minutes later, Isaac heard for himself the promised blessings that came to his father by faith and were affirmed through obedience and trust: *“...because thou... hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”*³ What a tremendous lesson

and promise not just for Isaac, but for all of us: God calls us to obey him at all costs, and yet even our highest service or act of obedience is far outweighed by His mercy and eternal blessings.⁴

Isaac's submissive spirit and peaceable faith were further revealed when he desired a helpmate. His father Abraham sent a trusted servant to find a godly wife, and for many days Isaac awaited the servant's return. In the midst of increasing anxiety and anticipation, *“Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.”*⁵ Through his meditations, Isaac's heart was prepared to accept God's direction and provision. When the servant returned, Isaac was moved by God's work and Rebekah's faith. He *“took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her.”*⁶ As we face uncertainties of life, what a blessing when we can quietly meditate on God's goodness to calm our minds and allow God's Spirit and Word to shape our thoughts and speak to our hearts.⁷

In the years that followed, Isaac and Rebekah perhaps grew discouraged, as they had no children to inherit the promised blessings. But Isaac must have remembered his own birth, late in his mother's life. In faith and love, *“Isaac entreated the Lord for*

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*his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.*⁸ When we face discouragements and await the fulfillment of God's promises, may we like Isaac pray in faith for and with those we love.

Soon after, Isaac observed Rebekah's faith as she felt twin children struggling within her and asked God for understanding. *"And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb... and the elder shall serve the younger."*⁹ One may wonder whether years later Isaac struggled to reconcile God's declaration with his own personal affection toward his eldest son and his expectation that Esau would inherit the greater wealth and blessing.

When a grievous famine struck the land, Isaac prayed in faith to God, for guidance whether to move to a more fertile land. God answered, *"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; ...and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."*¹⁰ There was no great command to do anything except

quietly endure and be still, trusting in the unfolding of God's promises.

As the famine raged on, Isaac's servants twice unearthed wells to water his flocks, only to have his neighbors claim it for their own. Rather than fight, Isaac peacefully retreated to a different location. God rewarded his faith by reassuring him to *"fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed."*¹¹ May we like Isaac see ourselves as pilgrims on the earth, bearing the fruit of peaceableness and embracing the blessed assurance of being the children of God.¹²

As Isaac's body began to wear down in his old age, he desired to bless his favored and eldest son Esau before he died. In a somewhat perplexing account, Rebekah and Jacob deceived him into granting Jacob the blessing he intended for Esau. When Esau then appeared and asked for his father's blessing, Isaac trembled in confusion, struggling to grasp what happened. He blessed Esau with a heartfelt but lesser blessing, respecting the greater blessing he had already pronounced upon Jacob.¹³

Isaac must have wrestled with how and why this all unfolded, but through time and meditation remembered God's

declaration to his wife and recognized God's hand working to accomplish His will. Isaac accepted God's choice and again blessed Jacob, this time with full intention and faith entreating God Almighty to *"give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee."*¹⁴ May we likewise submit ourselves to God's direction and embrace his power to accomplish His will even through our weaknesses.

As we reflect on Isaac's life, let us be inspired by his submissive and peaceable faith, which links together Abraham and Jacob in an enduring chain of faith and promise that was ultimately fulfilled in Christ, and continues to include us today as joint heirs of God's eternal promises.

¹ Hebrews 11:20

² Genesis 22:6-13

³ Genesis 22:15-18

⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:17

⁵ Genesis 24:63

⁶ Genesis 24:67

⁷ Psalms 1:2

⁸ Genesis 25:21

⁹ Genesis 25:22-23

¹⁰ Genesis 26:3-4

¹¹ Genesis 26:24

¹² Matthew 5:9

¹³ Genesis 27

¹⁴ Genesis 28:1-4